

## **“But Thou Didst Follow My Teaching ...”**

*“... conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience, persecutions, sufferings, what things befell me at Antioch, Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: and out of them all the Lord delivered me” (2 Tim. 3:10-11).*

There is some doubt in the minds of translators how to translate these words here. Did Paul mean to say Timothy had seen, personally, the apostle's life and had sufficient evidence the apostle's purpose was of conviction; or, did the apostle mean to say Timothy had practiced the things he had seen in Paul? Of the latter, nothing is more certain than that Timothy closely followed the things he saw in his mentor. Still, is that the thought the apostle intended to convey to his “beloved son”? The apostle has made a contrast between himself and some who would come in latter times; headstrong men who would be lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God; men who would hold a form of godliness but denying its power; men who would secretly peddle their false teaching to “*silly women*”; men who would withstand the truth as Egyptians magicians had withstood Moses; men who were corrupt in mind and reprobate regarding the faith.

Timothy had had many years to “*follow*” or observe Paul. Paul's mention of the trials he had experienced at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra went back many years. Those cities were first evangelized by the Apostle and Barnabas on their first journey (A.D. 45-48) and this; his last epistle would be dated almost 20 years later. Timothy is not introduced into Acts until chapter 16 where he is called a “*certain*” disciple whose faith and devotion had commended him to his brethren. Luke records that he “*was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium*” (Acts 16:2). Although he was identified as a disciple when he “catches the eye of Paul,” the fact that Paul regarded him as his “*son*” tells that Timothy was converted to Christ by the Apostle's preaching on his first journey. Timothy had followed the persecutions which befell Paul at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. Preaching in these cities proved to be trying times for Paul. At Antioch, “*the Jews urged on the devout women of honorable estate, and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out of their border*” (Acts 13:5). Passing to Iconium did not bring cessation to persecution for “*an onset (was made) by the Gentiles and of the Jews with their rulers, to treat them shamefully and to stone them*” and Paul's company fled to Lystra (Acts 14:5). There was no release from trials there, either for Jews from Antioch and Iconium persuaded the multitudes at Lystra and they “*stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he*

was dead" (Acts 14:19). And Timothy had followed these things -- he witnessed them.

Through his years as Paul's companion Timothy had heard Paul's teaching, saw Paul's conduct and courage, and observed his purpose. He knew Paul spoke truth when he wrote the Philippians, "*One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forward to the things which are before: I press on ...*" (Phil. 4:13). He had seen his faith; faith that permitted him to sing praises in the dark recesses of a Philippian prison; he had seen Paul's longsuffering, bearing with the weak, becoming (as he said) all things to all men. He had seen Paul's love for the gospel His Lord and his brethren, for those who accompanied him. He knew, as the Ephesian elders know that Paul's hands "*had ministered unto mine own necessities and to them that were with me*" (Acts 20:34). Timothy had seen the patience ... the steadfastness of Paul.

Timothy was a "*one of a kind.*" Paul wrote of him, "*I have no man likeminded who will care truly for your estate*" (Phil. 2:20). The Philippians knew "*the proof of him, that as a child serveth a father, so he served with in the furtherance of the gospel*" (Phil. 2:27). He shed tears on behalf of Paul, which weeping was something the apostle long remembered. By following Paul's teachings he learned two things: First, "*All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" and second, that just as God had delivered Paul from his trials, so will He deliver us. Blessed thought, this!

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